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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 0051
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 5444
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 000653

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/01/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [SP](#)
SUBJECT: MANAS: SPAIN PREFERS TO STAY WITH THE U.S., WOULD
PREFER TURKMEN ALTERNATIVE

REF: A. JUNE 24 COPE E-MAIL AND PREVIOUS
[1](#)B. STATE 23954

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Arnold A. Chacon for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In response to the news of Kyrgyz approval of a continued U.S. presence at Manas Transit Center, Spanish MOD and MFA have reiterated Spain's desire to partner with the United States, currently in Manas, in supplying coalition forces in Afghanistan. Because Spain was notified two months later than the United States of the initial GOK decision, subsequently overcome, to evict coalition partners, Spanish MOD staff specify that Spain has until October 20 (or six months from the date of notification) to resolve Spain's status in Manas. Defense staff and diplomats will nonetheless be working closely on the content of a revised bilateral agreement. At the same time they are interested in resolving outstanding overflight issues with Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors, beginning with high-level engagement on the part of Foreign Minister Moratinos. Beyond the newly negotiated U.S.-Kyrgyz understanding, and perhaps in anticipation of increasingly difficult future negotiations with the GOK, the Spanish expressed interest in access to bases in Turkmenistan that would give them much shorter routes to supply Spanish deployments in RC-West. Discussions June 29 with military planners also touched on Spanish sponsorship of Colombian forces under ISAF and Spain's deployments in support of Afghan presidential elections. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Spanish defense officials were pleased but not surprised to hear of the Kyrgyz Parliament's approval of a revised agreement between the USG and the GOK for the continuing use of Manas Transit Base. Spain intends to follow "the same procedures as before" in renegotiating its own presence on the base under an agreement currently due to expire October 20. BG Jose Javier Munoz Castresana, Subdirector General of Cooperation and Civil Defense within Spanish MOD's Directorate General of Defense Policy (DIGENPOL) told Pol-Mil officer and Assistant Naval Attache on June 29 that the GOS planned to speak informally with U.S. officials as well as GOK authorities, and would also participate in various bilateral meetings within NATO, with the aim of remaining operationally linked to U.S. forces in Manas. Castresana expected a quick renegotiation, to be initiated in July and resolved by September, after the August vacation period. He noted Spain had longer (until October,

vice August) to come to a new agreement with the GOK because Spain had been notified later than the U.S. of the GOK's intention to close the base. DIGENPOL staff expect to work closely with MFA's Subdirector General for Strategic Affairs as well as the regional office responsible for Afghanistan on the terms of a new deal.

13. (C) While Castresana acknowledged the need for a new bilateral agreement and expressed a desire to remain tied to the U.S., he said Spain would be especially interested in the status of any U.S. negotiations with Turkmenistan. A Turkmen routing would be preferable due to potentially shorter and more direct overflights to supply Spanish troops in Afghanistan. In this context, Castresana also mentioned the Spanish "problem" of overflights with hot cargo, which he said was handled differently at Manas by the United States and Spain. Foreign Minister Moratinos would travel to the region the week of June 29, according to Castresana, and would broach overflights with Uzbek and other counterparts in search of a solution. NOTE: Moratinos was scheduled to travel July 1 with a Spanish business delegation to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. A previously scheduled trip that would have taken place in the March 10-11 timeframe was reportedly canceled due to health reasons. Spanish diplomats in Washington had advised the Department Moratinos would travel March 10 to Uzbekistan, and Spanish media explicitly tied the Minister's travel to the search for an alternative to Manas, saying Uzbekistan would be the better option due to its proximity to the Afghan border. END NOTE.

14. (C) MFA Sub-DG for Strategic Affairs Manuel Acerete confirmed July 1 that Moratinos' trip, which also involved a stop-over in Turkmenistan, would touch on Manas-related issues even though the Foreign Minister's itinerary did not include Kyrgyzstan, per se. Moratinos intended to capitalize on and expand improved bilateral relations with Turkmenistan, seen by the GOS as less and less isolationist. Like Castresana, Acerete cited ongoing difficulties with flight clearances for hot cargo as a primary reason for Spain's desire to explore alternatives. Spain had asked all three countries to be visited (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan) for and been denied hot cargo clearances related to upcoming deployments in support of Afghan elections. In addition, Spanish officials were working on resolving broader issues of coordination within the respective governments. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, Acerete noted Spain had gotten differing responses from the Kyrgyz MFA and MOD, depending on the types of cargo declared and the channels via which clearance was solicited. The GOS is seeking to engage and educate counterparts in hopes of alleviating problems associated with their superficial reading of and political reaction to the relatively low risks associated with hot cargo.

15. (C) Acerete responded with interest July 1 to the USG belief expressed by Pol-Mil officer that the Kyrgyz decision "opens up the possibility of other coalition members reaching similar agreements to access the Transit Center at Manas in support of their forces in Afghanistan" (ref A). Acerete had seen press coverage of the U.S.-Kyrgyz agreement but questioned whether Spain, too, would have to negotiate a whole new framework. He appreciated the heads up and shared several operational questions that he expects to address with his European affairs colleagues, the Spanish Embassy in Astana (there is no GOS representation in Bishkek), and MOD based on specific information to be exchanged between U.S. and coalition logisticians on the ground in Manas. Overall, Acerete reiterated Spain's desire to maintain the status quo: Spanish troops alongside U.S. troops wherever the U.S. supply operation requires the specifics, including cost, and weigh the implications of remaining with the United States under new terms.

16. (C) Moving beyond Manas, Castresana confirmed on June 29 that Spanish DIGENPOL General Benito Raggio had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Colombian military for Colombian forces to deploy with Spain under ISAF, and noted

NATO liaisons had authorized Colombian access to classified material. Castresana described a lack of capacity at Spain's current PRT in Qal-e-Now, Badghis Province, as the primary obstacle remaining to a Colombian deployment under Spanish auspices. Whether a Colombian company made up of infantry, engineers, and some Special Operations forces deploy by the end of the year or sometime in spring 2010 will depend largely on ongoing construction of Spain's new FOB, which should be "very advanced by winter." NOTE: BG Castresana did not/not mention the question of airlift for the Spanish-sponsored Colombians or reference any GOS hope the USG might fund their transport. END NOTE.

17. (C) Regarding the Spanish battalion who will deploy in support of Afghan presidential elections, Castresana said he "would not be surprised" if up to a company were to stay on in Afghanistan thereafter, depending on the post-electoral security situation. If the elections went smoothly and no run-off were required, he said, Minister Chacon could bring all the troops home.
CHACON